That Which Exceeds

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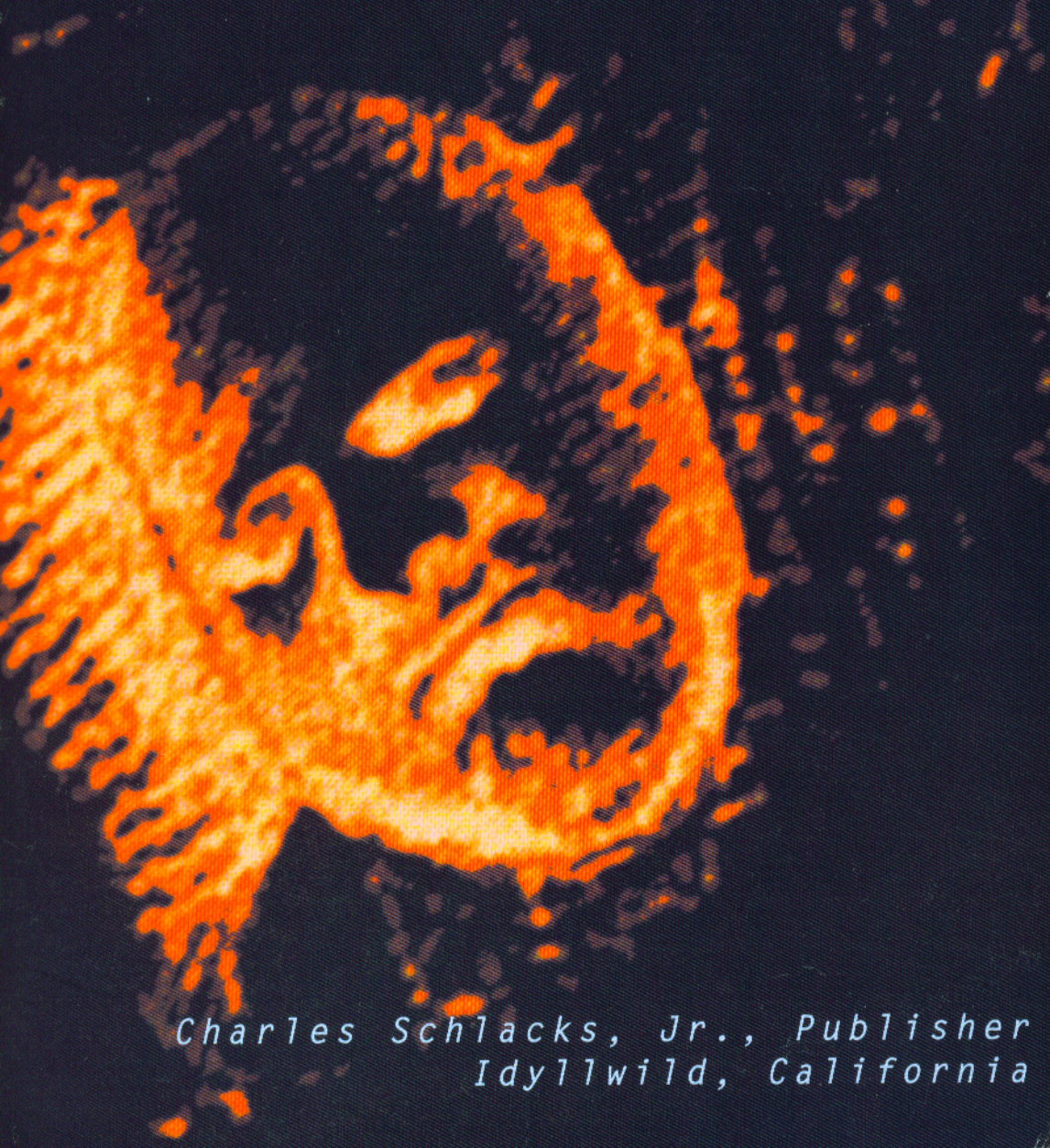

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Bonpoc OKa3biBaeTCH BbicMeaH. TaKHM o6pa3OM, Becb poMaH H3 cepb-g3Horo poMaHa o B3pocJieHHH H HHHU,HauHH noflpocrea npeBpamaerca B BbicmeH CTeneHH BeceJibifi - СВОНСТВО CTOJib ueHHMoe ApKaaweM, Bepcn-jiOBbiM H MaKapoM HBaHOBHHeM. НМСННО 3Та BecenocTb poMaHa H He no3BOJiaeT npHMeHHTb K HeMy KaKott-JiH6o O^HH Meroa <bHjioco(bcKO-aH-TponojiorHHecKoro aHajiH3a, a Tpe6yeT Bece'JiOH H HPOHHHHOH Hrpbi pa3-HHMH MCTOflaMH, C TCM HTO6bI BMeCTe C pOMaHOM nOCMeSTbCH Hafl HHMH CBeTJIbIM CMeXOM.

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PETER DAVID MATHEWS

THAT WHICH EXCEEDS

In his analysis of the painter Paul Cezanne, Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes the blurry outlines of Cezanne's pictures as symptomatic of his schizophrenia. It is as if Cezanne, remarks Merleau-Ponty, presents his madness visually. He commits an insane act by crossing the parameters of the expressive form, by trying to represent three (or more) dimensions in a two dimensional medium. The multihued outlines of Cezanne's works "vibrate" and "shimmer," the vestiges of a virtual world that still shakes from the novelty of its creation. There is an aetiological critique here, one that is echoed in the works of Dostoevsky. No longer do cause and effect derive from a single, uncomplicated essence, but rather by and through that which exceeds.

Dostoevsky's interest in religious, philosophical and political ideas, and the interweaving of these themes into his writing, have unfortunately caused many subsequent readings of his work to fall victims to what, after Eugene Ionesco, we might call the *"Rhinoceros* syndrome". In Ionesco's play the characters, each of which represents a different political movement, turn into rhinoceroses, with the exception of Berenger, the central character. The satire is aimed not only at a modern lack of original thought, but also at the pride with which each rhinoceros ironically proclaims its "uniqueness" in contrast to the others. The differing political proclivities of each rhinoceros are symbolized by whether they run to the left (liberal) or to the right (conservative) across the stage; the point being that this minor detail of separation is minuscule compared to their kinship as dumb beasts. Dostoevsky is too often seen as a "rhinoceros" in the service of a particular cause or idea when in fact, like Berenger, he is merely imitating one.

That which exceeds the facts

The parallel between Ionesco and Dostoevsky is made more poignant by considering a similar, though more abstract, phenomenon of transformation in *The Devils.* The reader is drawn in, at one level, by the apparent "realism" of the narrative. The story is a chronicle recounted in the first person by Anton Lavrentievich G-v, a young man caught in a whirlwind of political events. He challenges those who might question the authority of his account to consider his privileged status as a firsthand observer:

> It all happened in good earnest. [. . .] It may be asked how I could possibly come to know so delicate a detail. Well, what if I witnessed it myself? What if Mr. Verkhovensky himself has on more than one occasion sobbed on my shoulder, while descrying to me in lurid colours the smallest detail of his talk with Mrs. Stavrogin?1

Yet the narrative strays frequently beyond the boundaries of such possibilities. The reader is privy not only to detailed accounts of events at which the chronicler cannot have been present, but also to the thoughts and motivations - the "psychology" - of various characters. The narrator steps outside the limits of an eyewitness and recounts that which exceeds the abilities of even the most capable detective.

There is a sense in which this fantastic capacity is expected of the narrator. *The Devils*, after all, is a novel that evokes the supernatural. Embedded amongst frequent debates about atheism and its connection to political nihilism, the idea of using a "godlike" narrator must have appealed to Dostoevksy's own "Demon of Irony."[2] After all, clairvoyance constitutes one of the more "positive" aspects of demonic possession, at least from biblical accounts. Thus the narrator, too, is not spared from the book's thematic axis.

The question, like in so many of Dostoevsky's texts, revolves around not only the possession of the facts, but the interpretations that overcode them. In addition to the ambiguous position of the narrator, for instance, there is the matter of Kirilov and the conflicting motives that surround his suicide. The "facts" are continually demoted to a secondary status: what become important instead are the motivations and interpretations of the various characters surrounding Kirilov, as well as the comments he makes about himself. Dostoevsky's narrative game therefore turns into a series of psychological justifications whose extrinsic task is to explain the cause and effect of an action, an exercise that leads into a maze of irreconcilable contradictions. When Kirilov first enters the novel, for example, he accompanies Liputin to Stepan Verkhovensky's house. He is introduced amidst a separate affair, the marriage of Stepan to Shatov's sister Dasha, and thus it is Liputin, rather than Kirilov, that provides information about his character:

> He has already begun his study, and is writing a most interesting article on the increasing number of suicides in Russia and, generally, on the causes which lead to the increase or decrease of suicides in society. He has reached amazing conclusions.[3]

1. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Devils* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1971), p. 28.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

The vagueness of Kirilov's introduction is caused by the deliberate impediment of Liputin's gossip. He spouts inaccurate "facts" in front of the narrator and Stepan Verkhovensky, which Kirilov denies angrily. Thus the initial motivation given for Kirilov's interest in suicide is an academic one: he is writing an article.

A more detailed and accurate view of his philosophy is provided a few-pages later, when the narrator visits Kirilov in his home. There he asks Kirilov about the article. Kirilov says that he is writing, but hardly for academic purposes, and goes on to deliver a philosophical lecture about what separates his "grand idea" about suicide from that of the commonplace self-destroyer:

> Deception will be killed. Everyone who desires supreme freedom must dare to kill himself. He who dares to kill himself has learned the secret of the deception. Beyond that there is no freedom; that's all, and beyond it there is nothing. He who dares to kill himself is a god. Now everyone can make it so that there shall be no God and there shall be nothing. But no one has done so yet.[4]

Kirilov's point is as follows: since God is an invention of humanity, the elimination of humanity would result in two things: the death of God, and the elevation of humanity into His place. Kirilov's clever distortion of Pascal's wager provides the second motivation for Kirilov's death: he wants to kill himself for philosophical reasons.

But the task of mapping Kirilov's intentions does not end there. Other factors, such as his affiliation with the secret society, must be taken into account. Kirilov rarely demonstrates his interest either in socialism, or the objectives of the group of five, and least of all Peter Verkhovensky's "enthusiasm". Yet his involvement with the society must be considered because Kirilov offers his death to them without any outside suggestion. Neither is this offer his only contact with "subversive" groups for, as Shatov reveals, Kirilov accompanied him to America. Shatov and Kirilov traveled there in order to research the conditions of the working classes, but ended up being exploited themselves. Shatov exchanged his socialism for religious mania during his time in captivity, and because of this shift the two men now disagree fundamentally.

3. *Ibid.*, p.105.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

Whether their disagreement is political or philosophical is left unclear. However, there is enough in the text to suggest that, at some level, Kirilov's suicide may be tied to the vaguest of political motives.

Shatov further clouds these outward motivations by suggesting a more prosaic reason. Kirilov describes to him a strange sensation that occurs about once a week. He feels an "eternal harmony" with the rest of the world that is almost unbearable in its intensity.[5] Shatov tells him:

> Take care, Kirilov. I've heard that's just how an epileptic fit begins. An epileptic described to me exactly that preliminary sensation before a fit, exactly as you've done. He, too, said it lasted five seconds and that it was impossible to endure it longer than that. Remember Mohammed's pitcher from which no drop of water was spilt while he flew round paradise on his horse. The pitcher - that's your five seconds. It's too much like your eternal harmony, and Mohammed was an epileptic. Be careful, Kirilov - it's epilepsy![6]

Shatov's comments, which refer to art and philosophy as symptoms of mental illness, recall Merleau-Ponty's analysis of Cezanne (and indeed, Freud's comments about Dostoevsky). The reader is thus given four conflicting reasons for Kirilov's suicide: academic, philosophical, political and physical. Dostoevsky, of course, never clarifies as to which of these motivations is the "correct" one.

That which exceeds reason

The suggestion of mental illness seems at first to tarnish the grandiose ideas put forward in Kirilov's philosophy. Shatov's implication that his friend's will to death is epilepsy does not, however, reduce it to the level of the prosaic. It escapes such profanity because the two phenomena, rather than canceling out each other by contradiction, reinforce each other: epilepsy (which, in the structure of Dostoevsky's texts, is regularly tied to madness) is to reason what Kirilov's anti-theism is to the divine. The ideas of madness and atheism are tied together by being limit-phenomena. The speech of the insane, like that of the "holy man" Semen Iakovlevich, charts the boundaries of reason. Such is the importance of Iakovlevich's brief appearance in the novel: he embodies the apparently contradictory traits of a madman (one whose reason is debased to the point of nonsense) and a saint (who, though mad, nevertheless *transcends* rational thought for precisely this reason). His

5. *Ibid.*,p.587.
6. *Ibid.*

decision to anoint Maurice Drozdov is therefore in one sense "arbitrary", but its incorporation into the text forces it to transcend its lack of meaning. Dostoevsky achieves this transcendence through an excess of possible interpretations, as prefigured by the earlier example of Kirilov's suicidal motives.

The aetiological problem caused by such overdetermination is explored directly in *The Devils* when Lisa asks Shatov to help her with a literary project. Her idea is to gather current events into an annual encyclopedia of facts, to transform the incidents reported in the newspapers of each year into a book that is universally available as a historical record. Lisa insists that this chronicle must restrict itself to facts, without questions of interpretation or selection. Shatov insists that such a task is impossible:

> "You want something with a tendency, a selection of facts with a well-defined tendency," he muttered, still not looking up.
>
> "Not at all. There's no question of selecting anything of a tendentious nature. We don't want any bias. Complete impartiality - that must be our only tendency."
>
> "There's nothing wrong with a tendency," said Shatov, stirring. "Besides, it will be impossible to avoid it if there is going to be any selection at all. The selection of the facts will show the way they are to be interpreted."[7]

Shatov's political experience serves him well. He recognizes that not to be political is a political act, just as atheism is a theological stance.

As Julia Kristeva suggests, therefore, the "truth" underlying the grand narratives of Dostoevsky's text have not disappeared entirely but have instead fallen into abjection. Its aphanisis is achieved not by an abolition of truth ("there is no truth") but rather by an excess of truths (the absurdity of Balzac's assertion that "all is true"). Thus Kristeva writes in *Powers of Horror:*

> The abject is, for Dostoevsky, the "object" of *The Possessed:* it is the aim and motive of an existence whose meaning is lost in absolute degradation because it absolutely rejected the moral *limit* (a social, religious, familial, and individual one) as absolute - God. Abjection then wavers between the *fading away* of all meaning and all humanity, burnt as by the flames of a conflagration, and the *ecstasy* of an ego that, having lost its

7. *Ibid.,* p. 139.

> Other and its objects, reaches, at the precise moment of this suicide, the height of harmony with the promised land.[8]

It is important to understand Kristeva's definition of abjection as psychoanalytic. Unlike the object - that towards which the subject" is "thrown" by desire - the abject instead constitutes what is thrown away. These words are derived from the Latin word *iacere* (to throw). "Ob" is a Latin preposition meaning "on account of," rendering "object" as "on account of being thrown." *Ab,* similarly, is a preposition denoting movement "away" from something, allowing us to translate "abject" as "that which is thrown away." The abject therefore constitutes the repressed material of the unconscious, the dirt or "underground" of the psyche.

The Devils, confirms Kristeva, revolves around the intertwining themes of madness and divinity. Madness, on the one hand, is the disappearance of reason, the "fading away" of sense into a lack of meaning, into nonsense. This function is transgressive, at once cathartic and destructive. It frees the subject from the tyranny of reason's order, but at the same time unleashes a mindless chaos that threatens existence itself. Thus transgression, even if only symbolically, is a kind of "suicide". It is as if Dostoevsky, echoing Macbeth, has "killed" truth and logic, not by a dichotomous process of canceling them out, but by discovering the paradoxical coexistence of their alternatives. The double-edged facts "cut both ways," slicing apart the heterogeneous knot at the illogical, untruthful nuclei of "truth" and "logic".

Dostoevsky urges his reader to look "beyond" truth, to "transcend" logic. This exhortation foregrounds the religious themes of *The Devils,* in particular the state of "ecstasy" referred to by Kristeva. Etymology is again important in order to grasp the fullness of this term. The word "ecstasy" is derived from the Latin *ex,* a preposition that means "from out of," and "stare," the verb "to stand." Ecstasy therefore means, "to stand outside oneself," an act of transcendence that has given it the euphoric nuances it possesses in contemporary English. Jacques Lacan, the theorist to whom Kristeva owes much of her theoretical groundwork, relates religious ecstasy back to *jouissance,* a form of rapture that in French has strong sexual overtones. Lacan relates *jouissance* to religious experience in relation to Bernini's famous sculpture "The Ecstasy of St. Theresa." Old English, however, denotes a shade of meaning lost in the modern rendering of the word "ecstasy". In Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* for instance, the term distinctly refers not to a state of elation but to Hamlet's madness. Thus Dostoevsky's fascination in *The Devils* lies in an exploration

8. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1982), p. 18.

of the things that transcend logic, sense, interpretation, reason itself. *The Devils* is a journey into the underground, into that which exceeds reason.

That which exceeds the law of the father

Religious faith in the novel, like the pairing of abjection and transcendence, could therefore be read as a series of "couples" or "doubles". The most obvious, Kirilov and Shatov, form a complement of the other. If Shatov initially appears as a Christ-like figure - a blonde, intellectual and rather awkward version of the messiah - then Kirilov, with his atheism and philosophical resignation is a kind of "anti-Christ": what Shatov believes, Kirilov disbelieves; where Shatov sees life and significance, Kirilov sees death and insignificance. Shatov summarizes his philosophy in his meeting with Stavrogin:

> Socialism is by its very nature bound to be atheistic because it has proclaimed from the very first that [. . .] it intends to organize itself exclusively on the principles of science and reason. Reason and science have always, today and from the very beginning of time, played a secondary and a subordinate part; and so they will to the end of time. Peoples are formed and moved by quite a different force [. . .] That force is the force of an unquenchable desire to go on to the end and, at the same time, to deny the existence of an end. It is the force of an incessant and persistent affirmation of its existence and a denial of death. [. . .] the "seeking of God," as I call it [. . .] God is the synthetic personality of the whole people.[9]

Unlike Kirilov, who wishes to abolish God by a relentless logic, Shatov repudiates science and reason in order to *create* a God, a new deity for the Russian people. Although Shatov is a sacrificial lamb to the group of five, he is not a martyr but a potential creator, a "father," even if that fatherhood is a legal fiction.

This dimension of Shatov's character as father suggests an intertextual clue to the interpretation of *The Devils.* Dostoevsky provides the hint in the figure of Karmazinov. It is well known that Karmazinov is a satire of Dostoevsky's contemporary Ivan Turgenev. The political themes engaged in *The Devils* recall Turgenev's own examination of revolutionary nihilism in *Fathers and Sons,* his most famous novel. Dostoevsky's caricature of Karmazi-

9. Dostoevsky, *The Devils,* p. 256.

nov exceeds an *ad hominem* attack on Turgenev, however, by engaging his work at a philosophical and thematic level.

The reference to Turgenev reinforces this idea of dividing *The Devils* into a series of duos. The first of these couplings is, of course, the fathers of the novel, in particular Stepan Verkhovensky and General Stavrogin. Mr. Verkhovensky, however, is a father past his prime: he is sterile, unproductive, a creature of the past who is merely waiting to die. His patriarchal status has been usurped by Mrs. Stavrogin. Her power, inherited from her late husband, extends beyond Mr. Verkhovensky to the whole town. The impotence of the fathers (whose law, it seems, has died with them) breeds a new generation of sons: Nicholas Stavrogin and Peter Verkhovensky. Kristeva writes:

> Dostoevsky has X-rayed sexual, moral, and religious abjection, displaying it as a collapse of paternal laws. Is not the world of *The Possessed* a world of fathers, who are either repudiated, bogus, or dead, where matriarchs lusting for power hold sway - ferocious fetishes but nonetheless phantomlike. And by symbolizing the abject, through a masterful delivery of the *jouissance* produced by uttering it, Dostoevsky delivered himself of that ruthless maternal burden.[10]

Mr. Verkhovensky's son even calls his legitimacy gleefully into question: "It makes no difference to me really. So far as I'm concerned, you needn't worry: I'm not blaming my mother. Whether it was you or that Pole, it's all the same to me."[11] The doubt Peter casts on his parenthood brings back into play the first duo, Shatov and Kirilov. They are linked to the fathers and sons theme because they represent a new set of fathers.

This drive towards a new generation is marked by failure. Kirilov propounds a new age, but one in which the symbolic father, God, must be eliminated. Kirilov's is a sterile future: humanity can only transcend by annihilating itself, by eliminating the function of the father as generator both at a biological and symbolic level. Shatov expresses the opposite desire, the hope of rejuvenating the symbolic father in the form of a truly Russian God. His symbolic wish is concretized by the return of his estranged wife, Maria, at the end of *The Devils.* Heavily pregnant, she goes into labor that night, giving birth to a child that cannot possibly be Shatov's. He nonetheless accepts the child as his own:

10. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror,* p. 20.
11. Dostoevsky, *The Devils,* pp. 311-12.

> "The mystery of the coming of a new human being is a great and incomprehensible mystery, Mrs. Virginsky, and what a pity it is you don't understand it!"
>
> "The things the man says! It's simply a further development of the organism, and there's no mystery whatever here," Mrs Virginsky said with a sincere and merry laugh. "If you were right, every fly would be a mystery."
>
> "I'll never let him go to a home," Shatov declared firmly, staring at the floor.
>
> "You're going to adopt him as your son?"
>
> "He is my son."
>
> "Of course, he's a Shatov, legally he is a Shatov; you needn't pretend to be a benefactor of the human race."[12]

The child, as Maria reveals, is far from an Immaculate Conception (and hence a child of God (the symbolic father)) as her name might suggest, but is instead the progeny of Nicholas Stavrogin. Thus it is the archetypal son, Stavrogin, and not Shatov, the new father, who propagates the future. Shatov is destined to be sterile and, as such, his murder at the hand of the "group of five" does not echo the crucifixion of a Christ-like son (since Christ's task, by dying, was to allow humanity to transcend its sins) but rather a reenactment of the ancient parricidal myth described in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (the primordial institution of abjection). Furthermore, there is a famous quotation that Dostoevsky must have had in mind while writing this drama of generation. It comes from the first volume of Karl Marx's *Capital,* in which he writes: "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one."[13] The irony of *The Devils* is that the revolutionaries' movement towards the transcendence of the status quo leads them inexorably, not into a new Eden, but into abjection. The earthly paradise can only be bought with blood. "'For my part,' Lyamshin cried, 'instead of putting them into paradise, I'd take these nine-tenths of humanity [. . .] and blow them up, leaving only a small number of educated people who'd live happily ever after in accordance with scientific principles.'"[14] Maria's child, the embodiment of the future - of the possibility, at the last minute, of a return of the father and a movement out

12. *Ibid.,* pp. 588-89.
13. Karl Marx, *Capital* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 1: 916.
14. Dostoevsky, *The Devils,* p. 406.

of abjection - dies, taking with it the revolutionary hopes of a new world, of a society born from force.

That which exceeds the text

In 1921, a chapter entitled "Stavrogin's Confession" was discovered amongst the papers left by Dostoevsky's wife. It had been omitted from the original publication of *The Devils.* It is fitting that this supplement - this *textual* excess - brings together the various *thematic* excesses I have delineated to this point. It reemphasizes the indecisiveness of the facts by once again calling into question the motives of a character's actions: this time, the reasons behind Stavrogin's marriage to Maria Lebyatkin. Thus the reader is paraded through the usual series of insistent but conflicting confessions that proliferate during the course of the novel. Peter Verkhovensky, for example, explains this strange pairing to Mrs. Stavrogin as the result of Stavrogin's nobility: he married Mary for the sake of the sake of a sublime moral and aesthetic principle. Peter contrasts this view to Kirilov's cynicism:

> Anyway, let's say it was a silly idea of his, the whim of a prematurely tired man, or even, as Kirilov maintained, a new experiment of a man who was weary of life and who was anxious to find out what a pass a mad cripple could be brought. "You've purposely chosen one of the most wretched human beings," Kirilov said, "a cripple, a woman doomed to suffer disgrace and blows all her life, knowing, too, that this poor woman was dying of comic love for you, and you're trying to spoof her on purpose just to find out what will come of it."[15]

Later, while visiting Captain Lebyatkin, Stavrogin tells him: "I married your sister [. . .] after a drunken dinner, for a bet, for a bottle of wine."[16] In his confession, Stavrogin provides another contradictory account:

> One day, looking at Maria Lebyatkin [. . .] I suddenly decided to marry her. The idea of the marriage of Stavrogin to a low creature like that excited my nerves. One could not imagine anything more outrageous.[17]

The temptation is to treat this confession as "final" because it appears to be Stavrogin's last word on the topic. The end of the chapter, however, dispels that impression by subverting the anticipated closure of confession. Dostoevsky reopens the question by casting doubt on the confession's ability to achieve closure:

> "I see, I see, just as if it were happening in front of me now," Tikhon cried in a voice that penetrated the soul and with an expression of great sadness, "that you, poor, lost youth, have never been so near another and still greater crime as you are at this moment."
>
> "Calm yourself," pleaded Stavrogin, who was really alarmed for him. "Perhaps I shall postpone it. . . You're quite right..."
>
> "No, not after the publication, but before it. A day, an hour perhaps before the great step, you will commit a new crime as a way out, and you will commit it solely in order to avoid the publication of these pages."[18]

Stavrogin's angry reaction - he storms out of the room- is not a repudiation of Tikhon's prophecy, but rather implies a helpless confirmation of it. The prophecy thus denies Stavrogin's confession as a final, definitive statement; there will always be something to exceed it.

The great paradox about this missing chapter, of course, is that it was omitted from the original publication because of its content. Stavrogin's confession, after all, tells of how he seduced (or raped, the text is unclear) a twelve-year-old girl, Matryosha. Matryosha, in a fit of depression, hangs herself a few days later. These scenes were too much, too abject, for Dostoevsky's editor at the time, so the chapter was abandoned. Stavrogin tells Tikhon: "Don't try to dissuade me. I shall publish it."[19] His grim avowal, rebuffed by Tikhon's premonition at the end of the chapter, intertwines ironically with the historical act of censorship. As to the question of how this chapter should be treated - that is to say, whether it should be treated as a part of the text, or as something outside - the point surely returns to the same paradox explored throughout the novel. "Stavrogin's Confession" is the abject of the text, the excess that was thrown away, discarded, repressed; at the same time, it transcends it, not to engage a sense of finality, but to point, as it were, towards the beyond of its own excess.

Conclusion

The abject and the transcendent, the profane and the sacred, interweave in *The Devils* because they are both phenomena of the "outside": outside of reason, of social mores, of the general economy, as Georges Bataille has labeled

15. *Ibid.*, p. 196. -
16. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 693-94.
18. *Ibid., p.* 704.
19. *Ibid., p.* 698.

it. They are inextricably related because, exceeding the realm of everyday experience, they are equally "untouchable". It is as much a profanation for Lyamshin to steal grapes from the abject corpse of the young suicide as it is for Fedka to pillage the holy statue of the Virgin Mary. In *The Devils*, therefore, the extremities are not concerned with canceling each other out. Instead, through a series of paradoxes, they not only coexist but even reinforce each other. Like signposts aimed at each other, they also point beyond, to that which exceeds.

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ANDREW PADGETT

BEYOND DOSTOEVSKY: THE DISCOURSE OF NON-EXISTENCE

"Perhaps more than any other figure in the canon, Dostoevsky is equated by literary and critical discourses with an absolute encapsulation of the psyche and the world - life as a 'whole,' unabridged and unfettered, life with not only warts, but boils, pustules and syphilis."[1] I do not intend to dispute this claim, for Dostoevsky does indeed manage to portray life as it exists, as it is revealed both within and without the subject, that is - in all its unabridgedness. For Mikhail Bakhtin this is the defining characteristic of Dostoevsky's art, and we in turn have inherited Bakhtin as the foundation for our studies of Dostoevsky. Consequently, Dostoevsky's aesthetics came to ground the aesthetics of our own age through the hermeneutic circle fashioned primarily by the Dostoevskyan interpretation of life as psyche, and by our studies of his art through the prisms of "life" and "psyche". As is the practice of hermeneutics, the two exist within one another and mature within the other's understanding. This mutual dependence forms the basis of their relationship: Dostoevsky's art grounds our age in the rationale that the self is mediated by the absent other; and we justify our existence by locating it within the Dostoevskyan tradition. The existence of our world is *justified* only as a Dostoevskyan phenomenon. We enter Dostoevsky and find existent life residing within. We enter life and find Dostoevsky to be its sole existent inhabitant.

We have no choice, therefore, but to equate Dostoevsky with an encapsulation of the psyche and life, for it is by his rules that life (the reality of appearances) operates. To mention Dostoevsky and life in the one sentence is tautological. Dostoevsky is life, and life is Dostoevsky.

From within the bounds of this tautology, however, has arisen an unsatisfied society, one that has grown tired of the rhetoric of such a life, a society which can no longer trust the Dostoevskyan interpretation of life. This society demands the interrogation of the Dostoevskyan life, a life in which artistic and academic pursuits stagnate under the omnipotent gaze of the culture industry. The question they are asking is: why must it always be the absent other who we follow, who commands us, and from whom we

1. P. Mathews & B. Cooke, "Dostoevsky: Expressions in Silence," *The Dostoevsky Journal: An Independent Review*, 1 (2000), 1.